Floor Statement Senator Pete V. Domenici

Iran Non-Proliferation Act of 1999
Statement by Senator Pete V. Domenici
February 22, 2000

Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the legislation before us. This legislation is only one of many important steps required to counter the greatest threat to U.S. security in this era - the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

I am not being an alarmist. I am being a realist. The proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological technologies and the means to deliver them present a growing threat to U.S. security. This is a threat which we have only begun to address in the changed security environment of the 21st century.

Mr. President, I would like to mention three important aspects of the problem as stated by George Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence early in February.

First, Russia and China no longer represent the only missile threat to the United States. The missile threat to U.S. interests and forces from other nations is here and now.

Second, South Asian nations are establishing doctrine and tactics for the use of their missiles and weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan steadily intensifies. The potential for miscalculation, misperception and escalation of the conflict in Kashmir is high.

Third, the countries we previously considered technology importers are now assuming roles as "secondary suppliers." This compounds the proliferation problem and confounds our ability to control or defend against it.

As outlined in the most recent Intelligence Community assessment of Ballistic Missile Threats, by the year 2015 the U.S. will not only face the ongoing challenges of large-scale missile threats from China and Russia. U.S. cities will also confront a real threat from other actors - North Korea, probably Iran, and possibly Iraq.

One must mention that Intelligence Community's estimate excludes the possibility of social or political changes in those countries that would change the calculus. Also, the missile arsenals of these nations would be much smaller, limited to smaller payloads, and less reliable than Chinese or Russian capabilities.

At the same time, these remain a lethal and less predictable threat. Acute accuracy is not required for missiles tipped with nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads. And the U.S. cannot bank on rational actions from dictators like Saddam Hussein or Kim Chong-il.

At the same time that the threat increases, global changes make non-proliferation efforts even more difficult. Three specific aspects in the current international security environment will impede U.S. efforts to control or minimize this threat.

First, Russia - hard currency starved and heavily indebted - is a willing merchant - most notably of conventional defense items, but the U.S. Russian sales are not limited to this. This legislation attempts to address this aspect through creating incentives for the Russian government and others to implement and enforce stricter export controls on private actors or institutes in their dealings with Iran.

Second, North Korean No Dong missile sales are altering strategic balances in the Middle East and Asia. While the Administration's new strategy for engagement with North Korea may retard developments that require testing, such as reliability of long-range missiles, many suspect that the North Korean missile program continues and its role as a supplier of medium-range missile technologies has not been addressed.

Third, technological advances and rapid international economic integration alter and confuse the means by which the U.S. can control military advances of other nations. The list of potentially threatening "dual-use" technologies continues to grow. This is especially true of information technologies - command, control, communication and information technologies (C^3I) now comprise about 75 percent of a modern military's capabilities. But potential dual-use is also true of nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile technologies.

Mr. President, the proliferation threat will remain the our nation's number one security challenge in the 21st century. At the same time, the U.S. will be the most vulnerable to this threat. As George Tenet also noted: U.S. hegemony has become a lightening rod for the disaffected.

As Americans enjoy unprecedented prosperity, many in the world remain disaffected. These disaffected resent our power and prosperity. Our success fuels the intensity of their claims.

Mr. President, the same forces aligned against our non-proliferation objectives apply to terrorist organizations as well, whether state-sponsored or not. A disaffected Iran, despite some moderating trends, remains the most active state sponsor of terrorism.

Terrorist groups will continue to increase their destructive or disruptive potential through rapidly evolving and spreading technologies. Again, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents offer cheap means to achieve highly lethal terror. Acquisition of information technology may not only greatly improve a terrorist group's

means for organization and coordination of an attack, these technologies offer increasing potential for massive, possibly crippling, disruption of the U.S. information infrastructure.

Mr. President, this legislation is one small step in addressing the problem of supplying WMD technologies to Iran. But we have much more work to do. We must prevent when prevention is possible - such as providing safeguards for nuclear materials in Russia and controlling access to technology and know-how.

We must also find the most effective means to defend against such threats - such as training and equipping policemen and firemen to respond to such attacks and pursuing the best technological solutions to defend against such threats.

I believe that the U.S. is not pursuing the means of greatest potential against missile threats with sufficient rigor. For example, directed energy technologies represent the next revolutionary step in military capabilities. Laser technologies in particular can dramatically alter the U.S. potential to counter a missile attack. Missile defense at the speed of light will improve effectiveness and efficiency, substantially reducing cost-per-kill ratios.

Despite this understanding, the President's budget cut the Airborne Laser (ABL) program by $92 million. In addition, the President's defense budget reduced science and technology spending by more than $1 billion. The Administration proposes sacrificing the potential of real defense against proliferation threats through its short-sighted approach.

Mr. President, I have been at the forefront of prevention efforts, especially with respect to proliferation threats from Russia. I intend this year step up measures of prevention, especially the threat of nuclear proliferation in the form of brain drain from Russia. At the same time, I will put on a full-court press to improve the science and technology budget for the Pentagon, especially as it pertains to the most promising means of missile defense, directed energy.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in ensuring that every means of proliferation prevention is pursued. I also invite my colleagues to join me in increasing the means of our military's laboratories to provide for our defense.